

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 29, line 22 – page 30, line 4, as follows:

If a maximum width of each of the fused portions 64 is defined as N (will be referred to as a melt width below), and the width of the portion of the noble metal chip 64 closest to the fused portions 65 in a direction parallel to the end surface 47 of the ground electrode 40 (i.e., the diameter of the noble metal chip 65 in this embodiment) is defined as $D2$, a maximum depth of each of the ~~fused~~ fused portion 65 is defined as H is preferably less than or equal to twice the width $D1$. The melt width N is preferably less than or equal to 2.5 times the width $D2$.